

# THE LENINIST



**May Day March:  
Friday May 1 12.30  
Highbury Fields  
London**





Central Organ of the  
Provisional Central Committee of the  
Communist Party of Great Britain

DESPITE the severe setback suffered by the Scottish National Party, the Tory general election victory on April 9 has given a new lease of life to nationalism in Scotland. We should not be surprised at this. We are living through a worldwide period of reaction and in Britain the working class movement still suffers from the negative effects of the defeat of the miners' Great Strike.

These conditions are perfect for the growth of sectionalism in general and nationalism in particular. People no longer have faith in the power and strength of united working class action. As a result they seek to defend their interests by retreating into the dead end of class collaborationism represented by nationalism.

Under the banner of the newly formed Scotland United, an unholy alliance of the Scottish TUC, Labourites, Liberal Democrats, greens, Christians, pacifists, 'official communists' and SNPers have come together to further their campaign for constitutional reform and an unofficial multi-option "referendum on self determination" (*Morning Star* April 13 1992).

Of course there is mass sentiment favouring change in Scotland. Fifteen thousand rallied in Glasgow's George Square within 24 hours of the call from Scotland United. However, in a sad parody of the slogan "The workers united will never be defeated!", they chanted "Scotland united will never be defeated!"

Given these conditions, it would be easy for communists in Scotland to jump on the nationalist bandwagon. This would be a fatal mistake. Nationalism is a poison. There is nothing progressive or revolutionary about the Labour Party's devolved Scottish Assembly nor the SNP's plan for complete separation. In either case it would merely represent a relatively minor change in the way capitalism rules over and exploits the masses in Scotland (as a thoroughly respectable and bourgeois party, the SNP supported imperialism's war against Iraq and promises it would keep the existing monarchy).

Scotland has deep problems that ruin and blight the lives of its people. But they will not be solved by constitutional tinkering. An independent Scotland would, for example, have exactly the same sort of problems as today. So it cannot be emphasised too strongly that the sufferings and deprivations of Scotland are not the fault of the English people.

The crimes of deindustrialisation, low pay, endemic unemployment, poverty, bad health and poor housing affect both sides of the border and certainly do not stem from the union of Scotland and England. It is capitalism that is the problem ... and the task of communists is to organise the working class within the *existing state borders* to overthrow the capitalist state. That is best done if the working class is united as a *class* through overcoming all sectional divisions, whether they be racial, sexual or national.

It is because of this that we say the stronger nationalism becomes, the more communists must fight it. There can be no concessions, no watering down of our programme in face of the nationalist tide, especially if it is dressed up with absurd claims that the working class of England and Wales are irredeemably backward and are in some way "holding back" Scotland.

Does that mean we do not recognise or fight for the national rights of the people of Scotland? No. Communists defend the right of Wales and Scotland to determine their own future. We are for their right to self determination, and if the boss class refuses to concede that right we will ensure that it is realised through the revolutionary overthrow of the capitalist state.

Of course, fighting for the right to self determination is not the same thing as advocating the people of Scotland use that right to break the economic and political unity of Britain. We favour the voluntary union of the peoples of Britain. This creates the best conditions to further the interests of the working class and the cause of communism.

Those opportunists who have deserted the cause of socialism for nationalism will stop at nothing to malign and slander principled communists. The Euro breakaway Communist Party of Scotland, for instance, says that "there are only two organisations which defend the union of Great Britain - the Tory Party and *The Leninist*". Its leaders even say that our defence of the unity of the working class in Britain means that we "defend capitalism".

This is a foul lie, and these 'official communist' nationalists know it. We stand on the tradition of Tom Bell, William Paul, Arthur MacManus and Willie Gallagher; communists from Scotland who founded and built our Communist Party of Great Britain. These comrades had no truck with nationalism and nor will we. They subordinated everything to the task of making revolution and so will we.

*The Editor*

## LETTERS Bolshevik

After the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, betrayed by its own leadership, was pulled down and banned, on its political space there sprang up, and are growing, a number of different political parties, movements, and groups, expressing sometimes directly opposing social interests.

Undoubtedly, for 70 years many millions and millions of communists have selflessly built, consolidated and defended socialism. But in fact they were gradually robbed of the party which they joined in the years of the war and of the pre-war and the first post-war five year plans. At first the drift of the CPSU towards opportunism was concealed beneath Leninism, and afterwards, having been legitimated by Gorbachev, inevitably grew over into bourgeois counterrevolution.

The 20th Congress of the CPSU [in 1956] was in our opinion the beginning of the 'slide' into the abyss of political non-existence, and the anti-Stalin campaign, officially designated the "critique of the cult of the personality", played the role of ideological overture.

Objectively this campaign led to the undermining of the authority of world socialism, to serious difficulties in the world communist and workers' movement, to confrontation with the Communist Party of China, and subsequently of the USSR with the People's Republic of China, and to the activation of the opponents of socialism in the countries of Eastern Europe.

Of course, some of the preconditions for all this were present already in the preceding history of the Soviet Union, but the possibility of their realisation was restricted by the state of the dictatorship of the proletariat. When, however, under the canopy of the rapidly advancing black economy the Soviet state was transformed into an "all-people's state" and the CPSU into the "party of the whole people", then the preconditions which had earlier been neutralised, were transformed into active factors, which have given rise to Gorbachev and everything that has taken place after it.

Inasmuch as perestroika put party politics under the covert control of entrepreneurs and businessmen, those in the party leadership whom it was usual to regard as continuators of the Leninist course in the CPSU, and who the 'democrats' accused of 'dogmatism' and 'conservatism', turned out not to be up to scratch. At the same time as M Gorbachev, A Yakovlev and E Shevardnadze accommodated themselves to the interests of foreign and domestic capital, E Ligachev and I Polozkov and other 'true Leninists', in the interests of preserving "peace and unity in the party", gradually accommodated themselves to the opportunists. Hence the opportunists gained complete dominance in the leadership of the CPSU and, the link between the politics of capital and the politics of the 'true Leninists' having been closed, millions of Soviet communists ended up without their own Marxist-Leninist general staff and the country began to roll down into the abyss of national disaster.

At the present time, the parties and movements of a communist orientation are proposing different programmes of action to avert final collapse and civil war. These proposals include a constituent assembly to determine the form of government, and the convening of the congress of deputies of the USSR, in order by parliamentary means to put an end to the present course of the restorationists and capitulators. There is, too, the transformation of the soviets, by means of elections called ahead of time, into representative organs of working people, and the creation of soviets in enterprises as alternatives to the present 'democratic' soviets, and mass meetings and demonstrations.

Probably a majority of these aims have real substance to them and can play a definite role. However, in our opinion, they all contain one defect -

they do not take account of the possibility of counteraction by the powers that be, which for the time being are still capable not only of undermining, but also of turning the intentions of the defenders of socialism to their own advantage. Therefore the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks (VKPB) considers that in the present conditions only a *political general strike* - which alone is capable of disorganising the forces opposing the workers, removing from power the bankrupt restorationists in the centre and the localities, restoring the power of the working class and its allies, introducing universal control by the workers over production and distribution and creating detachments of workers' self defence, to neutralise the fighting formations of the mafia bourgeoisie - can fundamentally change the course of events by peaceful means.

We consider that "communist multipartyism" on the ruins of the CPSU is an entirely natural phenomenon. There is taking place a process of analysing the causes of the historic defeat and intensive searches for a solution to the crisis. No one has a patent on the truth. Therefore attempts by any party, exploiting the need of party members for unity, to monopolise this process today can only complicate the prospects for authentic unity. The VKPB considers that on the agenda today is the unity in action of all communists in their struggle with the restorationists, and unproductive discussions about "agreeing" of platforms and programmes. The mass anti-restorationist movement will in practice lead to the selection of "points of view", and their "competition" must not weaken the attack on the gravediggers of socialism.

We are convinced also that in present conditions the confusion and vacillation of reviving the CPSU cannot serve the consolidation of the unity of communists. The present collaboration of partocrats and entrepreneurs who are in favour of artificial reanimation, is incapable of producing anything other than a "superclass" neo-perestroika party, which will inevitably inherit the flaws and defects of the Gorbachev leadership.

In its activity the VKPB proceeds from the fact that however dramatically events are now developing, the 20th century will enter history as the century of the trials and errors of world socialism: a socialism, which by virtue of circumstances unfavourable to it, could not in a painless way clear away the obstructions erected in its path by international capital. In contrast to the critical present moment, the approaching 21st century is in our view destined to become the epoch of global transition to the communist social formation. Not a 'market' order, but one of authentic freedom and humanism, to which, independently of anyone's desires, all the paths of world civilisation are now leading. Unfortunately, they are not as smooth as the pavement of the Nevsky Prospekt.

The All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks will begrudge nothing in order to hasten this triumph of communism. On this we stood, do stand, and will stand!

**Nina Andreeva**

All Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks, Leningrad

## Fascism

I would like to take up some of the points raised in your front page article 'How to beat fascism'. *The Leninist* No 17, especially the issue of Carnival 2 at Brixton in 1978.

You are absolutely right to criticise the political cop out of the SWP national leadership in calling on anti-fascists to picnic at Brixton rather than defend Brick Lane, but you are totally wrong when you state "that it was left to a few hundred non SWP anti-fascists to oppose the NF's East London provocation".

On the day in question the vast

majority of the non Bengali anti-fascists in Brick Lane were in fact SWP members, the remainder were mainly local anarchists.

It is interesting that you omit to mention 'your' CPGB line on fascism during the 70s and 80s. Just as the SWP/ANL went off to picnic at Brixton in 1978, 'your' CPGB marched away from the fascists, following vicars and priests to their own little tea party, at Lewisham in 1977. During the 1970s 'your' CPGB consistently derailed the anti-fascist struggle in East London, with the honourable exception of only two or three local rank and file party members.

You seem to have a very selective memory when it comes to the history of the CPGB. The CPGB leadership in fact planned to capitulate to Moseley by ordering its members to rallies in west London, on the day of the march. It was only under pressure from the local Jewish community and the threat of open rebellion by the east London members of the CPGB that led to a change of line, only days before Moseley's march.

It would appear to me that *The Leninist* comrades are making the serious error of confusing dreams and reality in their contorted attempts to show the CPGB, a corrupt, lifeless and reactionary organisation from start to finish, has a heritage worth preserving.

To finish on a more fraternal note, your demands for democracy in the ANL are absolutely correct. Democracy and accountability in *all* workers' organisations is an absolute essential. **Jim Kelly**  
London

## Irish POW

I give full support to the Hands Off Ireland! march and rally, and wish it every success.

With regard to the Irish Republican Socialist Party and League of Communist Republicans: you must not assume that because you have had no response from them to articles in *The Leninist*, then those groups are 'no longer functioning', though for all I know, that could be true. I have had very sketchy responses from comrades I have written to over the past year, but my impression is that IRSP, at least, continues, despite many difficulties.

I believe your style of work is 'elitist' to a negative degree. I put 'elitist' in inverted commas because I concede that there is a kind of elitism which is necessary - the conviction of your own analysis that you have correctly applied Marxism-Leninism to any situation.

Let me also make the point that although I have been writing purely from my own experience, as an ex-CPGB member, I know that there are hundreds of other comrades who have over the years resigned from or been expelled from the CPGB because they know that a party with a programme *British Road* just was no longer a Communist Party. There were genuine Marxist-Leninists before the CPGB PCC, there still are many outside the CPGB and I want to see all maximum forces brought into action. It would be nice if you could persuade all those forces they should simply join you, but that is not the way it will work, nor should it. The quicker that you, together with others, develop a method which can result in principled unity for a reformed Marxist-Leninist CPGB, the better.

**Peter Jordan**  
Republican Socialist POW  
Long Lartin Prison

Note: Letters have been shortened due to lack of space. For reasons of political security we have changed certain names, addresses and details.

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# Building on success

The 9th Party Offensive of the Communist Party of Great Britain is reaching a critical new stage



If we are to use the election campaign as a springboard to bigger things, we need finance

**T**HIS YEAR, the leadership of the Party - the Provisional Central Committee - has set a target of £70,000. This will cover the costs of our general election intervention, our publication of the *Communism Lives!* series and our European conference in Edinburgh in December of this year. These and other Party actions place tremendous strains on the financial resources of our organisation.

This is why the target for this year's Offensive is some two and a third times bigger than any previous Offensive. It is not an extravagant, throwaway figure that arbitrarily popped into the minds of PCC members: it is the basic minimum that our organisation requires to fulfil the tasks that we have recognised life itself posing to us.

The initial period of this year's Offensive has been extraordinarily hard for comrades. Other Party actions - in particular the general election campaign - have absorbed time and diverted them from money-making.

And what brilliant successes the Party has scored in the course of the first four months of this year! Every serious target we set ourselves for the general election, we achieved.

We stood the candidates we wanted to stand in the areas we wanted to stand them. Our propaganda battle plan worked, from the near quarter of a million individually addressed election communications to the relaunch of the *Daily Worker*. The establishment of a functioning Party press was a major step forward, promising a greatly expanded range of Party publications in the future at a fraction of current costs. An impressive range of stunts gave our Party a high profile in the course of the campaign, taking the name and ideas of the Party to literally millions of workers.

These have been important advances for our Party. But they have been won at the expense of literally tens of thousands of comrade hours of detailed, singleminded work. Nothing was presented 'on a plate' for any of

our comrades. The period of the 1992 general election campaign has been the most intense, the most exhausting, the most rewarding that our organisation has ever been through.

Inevitably, the Party Offensive had to take a back seat in some ways during this stretch of the hardest work the Party has ever undertaken. Now, comrades must build on the tremendous successes of the first part of the year to storm the £70,000 target of the 1992 Offensive. The 9th Communist Party Offensive now needs the undivided attention of all comrades.

With just over three months to go, the Party needs to get its hands on £52,000. *Urgently*. We have outstanding bills from the first part of the year that must be met if the Party's work is not to be crippled throughout 1992. We have to raise money at a rate of nearly £3,500 a week to make sure to win.

Pledges from comrades for this first half of the Offensive amount to near £25,000. A new set of pledges will be taken at a special meeting on Sunday May 3 at a venue in London (write or phone for details). These new targets must take the Party within striking distance of the £70,000 figure (a *minimum*, remember).

The key to winning this year's Offensive is to bring the same aggressive spirit of enterprise and innovation to it that comrades displayed in the course of the general election campaign. We were not daunted by the huge Tory, Labour or Liberal Democrat political machines we faced. Whether it was in the form of egging our Tory opponents, trailing pompous Labour MPs with megaphones or some aggressive and effective door step canvassing work, our Party showed its fighting mettle.

Thus, comrades must be aggressive - turn *outwards!* We must cast our net as widely as possible for contributors to the Party's fundraising efforts. The struggle that our organisation is waging is not a narrow one for the intellectual benefit of a few 'hardliners'. On our success in the fight to reforge the Communist Party of Great Britain

depends the success of the working class itself.

This must reflect itself in the range of people we approach for support.

A recent donation to the 9th Communist Party Offensive from Hatfield Main pit in the beleaguered Yorkshire Area National Union of Mineworkers, on the verge of a bitter strike against privatisation and job losses, illustrates this point beautifully.

On the other hand, the fading New Communist Party - in the dumpy, apolitical form of its general secretary Eric Trevett - turn to diplomatic internationalism/prostitution in order to replenish its party coffers. A recent *New Worker* eulogy to Kim Il Sung, the North Korean leader, penned by Eric himself is clearly designed to earn more than praise from the "great leader".

Speaking for our Party, we prefer the donations of the miners of Yorkshire, even if they cannot cobble together as much as Kim could (if he thought it worth his while, which we doubt).

So it is good news to hear that comrades are now planning car boot sales to kiss goodbye to some of their dwindling collection of consumer durables; that some fulltimers are planning to laugh in the face of the recession and 'launch' themselves onto the labour market and that most others have various money making schemes up their sleeves ranging from book sales to 'Marx and Lenin London walks' to catch the tourist trade.

But at the same time, we urge comrades not to just look to themselves. Despite the period of reaction, our general election campaign showed that there are potentially thousands of workers out there who can be won to support their Party. As with all previous Party Offensives, the 9th must see us fight to turn outwards, for donations to the Party from *all* partisans of working class struggle.

Work, creativity and initiative for the 9th Party Offensive!

Forward to a reformed Communist Party!

Mark Fischer

The Turkish state is escalating its attacks on revolutionaries. Over April 16-17, 11 suspected members of Dev Sol (Revolutionary Left) were shot dead in Istanbul. In Turkish Kurdistan, state forces shot dead 30 people. Six or seven were members of the Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK), the rest civilians. Tanks and helicopter gunships are being used with impunity against the Kurdish people. In addition, the Turkish state uses South American style death squads against Turkish revolutionaries and Kurdish nationalists. Kurdish workers in London protesting against this have been brutally attacked by British police, with many hospitalised. Since April 17, 50 Kurdish people have been on hunger strike in protest against these massacres, demanding recognition of the right to self determination, something both the British and Turkish states are committed to opposing by force of arms. Support the hunger strike at 11 Portland Gardens, London N4. The hunger strike committee can be contacted on 081-880 1759. *SQ*

On Saturday April 18, Hands Off Ireland! marched to commemorate the 1916 Easter Rising in Dublin and to demand troops out now. The march went through Brent East, where CPGB candidate Anne Murphy stood in the general election, against Ken Livingstone. We went straight from the election into the demo, with just over a week to build it. Unlike Livingstone's rather dubious 'republicanism', our support for Irish freedom means we call for troops out *now*, and organising to make that a reality. The march took place, not only directly after the election, but in the face of police pressure to cancel it because of the Staples Corner bomb of the previous Saturday, which had occurred just up the road from the march's route, and against fascist threats of attack (who, in the event, wisely thought better of it and failed to show). Anne



Marching for Irish freedom on no messing politics

Murphy, speaking at the rally in Kilburn, made the point that at such a time it is even *more* important to make clear which side we are on, to raise the slogan "for the IRA, against the British army". HOI! did on April 18, and will continue to do so in all its campaigning. The mass movement that we need can only be built by confronting imperialism when the going gets tough, not by digging in until 'better days'. *AM*

Yorkshire area of the National Union of Mineworkers has voted for strike action, for the first time since the Great Strike. The decision was taken in response to British Coal's introduction of private contractors. About one quarter of the NUM's members are private contractors, with total union membership at 40,000, as compared with 200,000 before the 1984-5 strike. British Coal is accelerating what Hatton Main branch delegate, Dave Douglass, called "creeping privatisation". Where contractors were introduced before through voluntary redundancies, Armthorpe miners found they had them forced on them through involuntary redundancy. In February over 70% voted for strike action. British Coal won an injunction against this, for technical reasons, and the men were re-balloted. This time, over 80% voted for action. Yet, before the election, the area leadership was slow to respond with support for Armthorpe. They did not want to embarrass Labour with a show of workers' militancy. So Armthorpe was left isolated until after the election, when an area ballot was taken. One excuse made was that the union wanted to avoid confusion between an election and a strike ballot! Miners should be wary of a leadership that sacrifices workers' solidarity to the Labour Party. You can guarantee it will not return the favour. As we warned in the *Daily Worker* before the election, although one day strikes will hit British Coal when it needs to increase reserves, it is quite capable of sacrificing short term profit for the political gain of smashing the NUM, as it tried in the Great Strike. Miners must be prepared to up the stakes, drawing in support from other workers where necessary, particularly in related transport and power areas. *DR*

## Cash flow crisis



While I am out selling *The Leninist*, customers sometimes give me a questioning look when I ask them for 50p. I explain that it costs much more than 50p to produce our paper, and that we are subsidising the price. Usually they take the paper and give me a donation as well. Roughly half our costs have to be met this way, hence our £600 monthly fighting fund. The extra bills mentioned in the last issue led to a real crisis, where for a few hours we had no money to dispatch the papers to our readers and sellers. Fortunately, your donations came to the rescue, and already we have over £500 for April. Special thanks to MM, TD, TR and JS for your contributions.

Vernon Douglas  
Fund organiser

# Politics of the future

The communist election fight put our politics forward as the only real alternative to Labour, Tory and the whole capitalist system



Picket of Labour's election press conference, commemorating the election of Bobby Sands on April 9 1981: communists made sure Ireland was an election issue

SOME SAID it could not be done. Many others said it certainly *should not* have been done. But the Provisional Central Committee of the CPGB's intervention in the elections both tested and developed our comrades.

It has become something of a truism within our organisation that, in politics, there is no such thing as staying still. A truism maybe, but still *true*, nevertheless. If you try and tread water, you end up being swept backwards with the current. We swam against the tide in this election. While the bourgeoisie would rather bury us - again - most of the left just call to vote Labour, and even some of our more distant sympathisers called for less ambitious action, we knew it was vital to take on this election.

The list of 'socialists' and 'revolutionaries' that

call for an alternative to Labour, and then go on to call for a vote for it, is as long as your arm. Think: faced with a rightwing Labour Party, that makes no real pretence at being socialist; faced with a working class where even its best elements have parliamentary illusions, what better way of building the alternative is there than to put its programme, its politics, against yours at election time? What worse way could there be than vacating the political arena - either by calling for a vote for Labour or just by abstaining - when these questions are posed on a mass level at election time?

For us, this seems obvious. For the mass of the left, with its deep rooted belief that its own politics are unrealistic, the reverse is true.

We were told by leftists supporting the Labour

Party that standing against it would alienate us from the mass of the working class. The same people that told us this tended to disappear during the election, or get subsumed within Labour's electoral strategy. In other words, they were irrelevant not only to the mass of the working class, but to everyone except themselves. We, on the other hand, were able to address millions of working class people (see 'Election revolt', below). Where the 'Revolutionary' this, 'Socialist' that and 'Workers' the other hid behind Kinnock's podium, or waved 'vote Labour' posters behind Major's soap box, many people are now aware of the significance of the letters CPGB that were not before. Creating that audience for revolutionary politics was an important task, that only our organisation seriously addressed in the election.

What use is the rest of the left going to be in representing the working class, if it is even ashamed to stand under its own banner in something as mundane as a bourgeois election?

We did not just confront the Labour leadership, but also the Labour left. Ken Livingstone, now after the crown of Labour's leading lefty (and backed by *The Sun* in his campaign for Labour leader), was shocked to find a CPGB candidate running against him. Why? Wasn't he a good socialist? Isn't he outspoken against his party's leadership, and more than a little risque on Ireland?

We confronted this sham head on. We had said before hand that if he stood on basic minimum demands for working class rights, we would gladly support him. One of these demands was for troops out of Ireland now. Livingstone refused, point blank. After arguing that Ireland was not an issue for Britain to decide on, he called for the withdrawal of troops in the lifetime of one Labour parliament. In other words, Ireland turns out to be an issue for the British state to decide on, as far as Livingstone is concerned: it *decides* how and when it gets out. For the Labour left, getting the troops out of Ireland is conditional on the ability of a Labour government to do it gradually and peacefully. For communists, the demand for troops out *now* is unconditional.

Every step of the way, the Labour left shows itself

tied to the imperialist Labour Party, and through that to the imperialist British state. Communists have no hesitation in standing against the sham of reformist 'socialism' and 'anti-imperialism'. There was no blurring the distinction: if you want to carry on with the illusion that you can tinker with the system, vote Livingstone. If you believe we need a new system, vote Murphy and get active!

And, of course, we confronted all those 'revolutionary alternatives' on the left that are no alternative.

We were pleased with the campaign: we set ourselves a minimum beforehand, and went way beyond it, despite few resources. The lessons learnt through this were invaluable, giving us experience we would otherwise not have gained, that can be employed in many areas of our work.

Our votes were not massive: Tam Burn (Glasgow Central), 106; Mark Fischer (Rhondda), 245; Stan Kelsey (Bethnal Green and Stepney), 156, and Anne Murphy (Brent East), 96. But we never expected a mass vote for communism under today's conditions. What we *wanted* was to show there is a fighting answer to capitalism, that communism did not go down with the Berlin Wall. And this was put forward on a national basis, with communist candidates in Scotland, England and Wales.

We have not won the argument: that will not be won under these conditions in the course of one election, but in practice by the mass of the working class. The significant thing is that we began to put it back on the agenda.

Mass propaganda allowed us to address the minority within the working class who are sick of all the old crap, and who are looking for answers. Our organisation will keep hammering home the only real answer of communism: in theory and increasingly in practice.

Putting off the fight today just makes it harder tomorrow. The time to stand up for the politics of the future is now. The election is over, but the fight is only beginning. Join us and make sure that this future comes all the sooner.

Alan Merrick

## Election revolt

We threw all our resources into the election campaign, working at a level we had never before achieved. But this is only the beginning

"REVOLTING AGAIN!" was the caption under *The Independent's* quarter page photo and report of the launch of our manifesto and the *Daily Worker* outside the Westminster parliament. This message was also hammered into the listeners of Radio 4 news that very night where comments from our election candidates were repeated from our press conference every hour throughout the night.

Revolt? How very true! Our aim in this election was to reclaim and rebuild the Communist Party of Great Britain. To take our history from those who so readily proclaimed it dead, and to present to the workers of Britain a real working class alternative to the bourgeois Labour Party. The main illusion for the working class is that the Labour Party was an alternative to the Conservatives; that somehow Kinnock would be a better bet than Major. Our task was to explode and destroy that myth. We had no millionaires filling our coffers, nor the block vote backing from the bureaucrats who meet once a month in Congress House. We ran our campaign on a shoestring, but with a lot of imagination and sheer hard graft from our comrades we managed to achieve a leap towards reforging the CPGB.

As soon as the election date was announced we threw ourselves head first into a flurry of activity.

Within two weeks, our brief was to get our politics across to as many people as possible. To take every opportunity and opening to make our interventions, whether knocking on doors or taking part in radio and television programmes. To attack, to argue, to debate and to agitate. This was the time when the vast majority of workers in this country actually turn to the political debate. For those of us who took part in this campaign it was a most intense, testing and educational period. At times stressful, exhausting and frustrating, having said that I believe that we came away better equipped and far more motivated by the experience.

We produced the *Daily Worker*, a national communist daily. It was our communicator to the class, a weapon to be used. A tool that we intend to use again. Our printers stayed up to the early hours of the morning so that editions could be produced for the next day (more of that achievement in other pages of this paper). Our election manifestos, all 250,000 of them had to be individually labelled and sacked for the post office; getting people to sit up all night so we could meet post office deadlines; dealing with the post office and their absurd claims that Stan Kelsey's election address to the voters of Bethnal Green was an incitement to racial hatred because we advocated workers defence corps against racist attacks.

Later on in the campaign it was a regular occur-

rence that people would come up and say "I've read your manifesto and I..." agree or disagree; the point being is that they had read it. For the first time for years, in most cases ever, they had read a piece of revolutionary election propaganda. We had started to sow the seeds of the future. We made sure that the local radio and local papers gave coverage to our candidates. In the *Willesden* and *Brent Chronicle*, Brent East CPGB candidate Anne Murphy was introduced to the electorate under the title of "Defending the working class". Stan Kelsey explained to the listeners of Capital Radio why communism is not dead, again introducing to many for first time a real alternative for young workers.

It was not just John Major who got the soap box out, communists in all our constituencies got out megaphones to blast our message home and to distribute the *Daily Worker*, heads turning with curiosity and surprise that the Communist Party lives on.

Rounds of public meetings organised by community groups, residents associations, etc, where our candidates were asked where they stood on everything from parking restrictions to unemployment and housing! In one such meeting in Brent East, BBC TV's Newsroom South East screened Ken Livingstone's absurd paranoia in accusing Communist Party members of being MI5 agents! We had no need to trade in such filth, we had a far greater weapon. We

had the truth that for all the claims to the contrary, the Labour Party is a bosses' party.

Labour's inability to debate was also shown in Scotland when Tam Dean Burn was physically removed from a meeting where Roy Hattersley refused to discuss the war in Ireland. Tam was filmed by BBC Scotland being removed still challenging him from the floor.

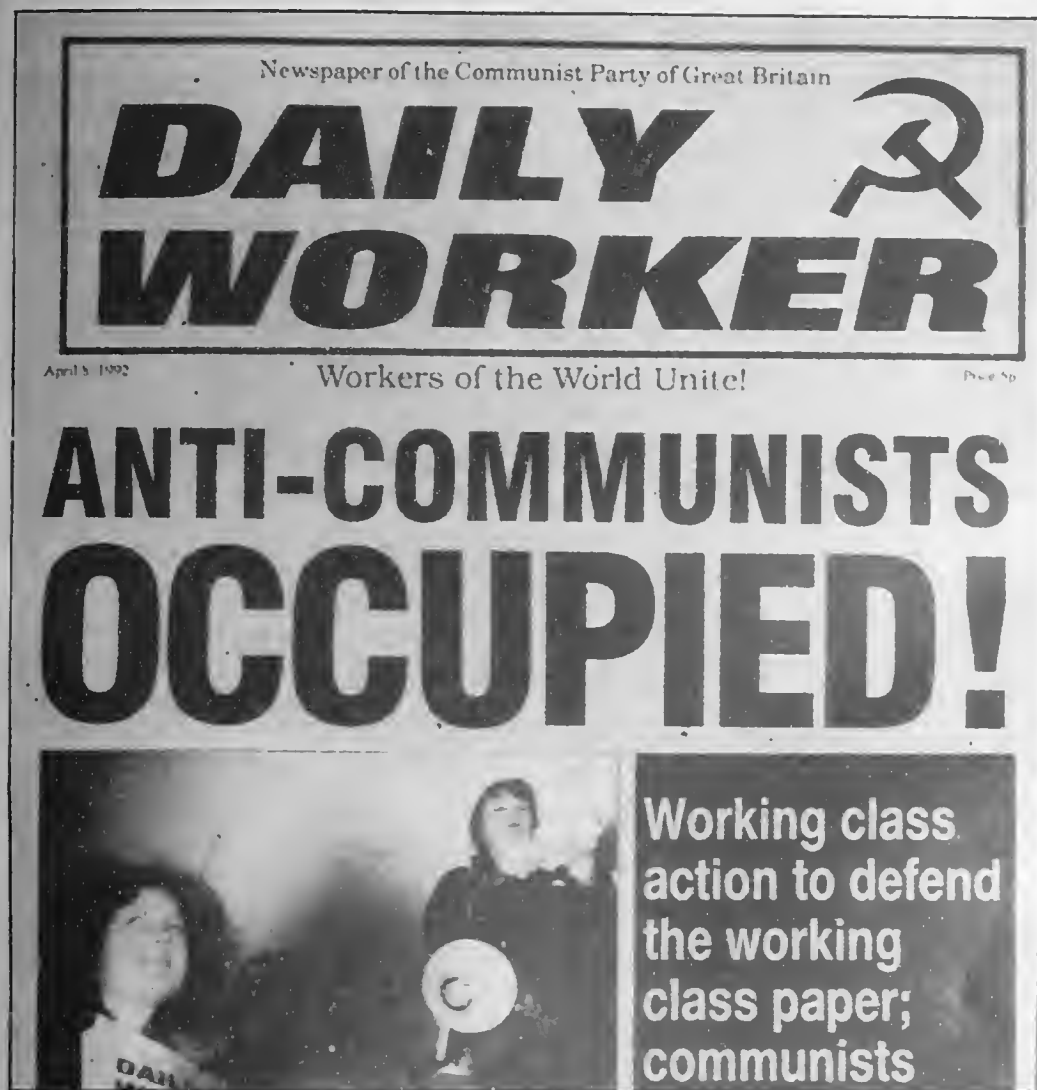
Anne Murphy was also setting the pace at an open debate between the parties on Greater London Radio: only the Communist Party was able to state that it had the policy and the courage to demand the smashing of the Prevention of Terrorism Act and the unconditional withdrawal of crown forces from the Six Counties. The Labour Party may have had a slick public relations team with busses of press officers and media watchers, but our candidates could respond to real issues with the truth.

We stated right from the start that our intervention was to use the bourgeois election for our propaganda: to use its newspapers, radio and television to make our claim that communism lives; to equip our comrades with experience to take forward our struggle to reforge the Communist Party. I believe that we succeeded in our aims. We can be justifiably proud of that achievement and take what we have learnt from this brief period for use in the future.

John Praven



# Towards a mass working class daily paper



Communist action reported in the communist daily: one of the first of many

During the election we carried out a trial relaunch of the *Daily Worker*. Although differences in the welcomed by many, the *Morning Star* movement should decided the title not be solved in was its property the bosses' courts

SIX ISSUES of the *Daily Worker* were published; one two weeks before the election, two the following week and three the next, on April 7, 8 and 9. The paper was an invaluable agitational weapon for the Communist Party of Great Britain's campaign. It gave our politics an immediacy which *The Leninist* by itself could not provide.

In short, we were well pleased by the results. We intend to make the *Daily Worker* a regular part of our agitational work, until we have reformed our Party, and relaunch the *Daily Worker* on a permanent basis, as the mass daily working class paper of the Communist Party.

But some viewed the *Daily Worker* with a jaundiced eye. The Communist Party of Britain backed *Morning Star* was determined that the Provisional Central Committee of the CPGB was not going to get its property.

Its property? How? Because in small letters, under the *Star's* main banner, it says "incorporating the *Daily Worker*".

The political dishonesty of this, how the *Star* threatened to use the bosses' courts against communists, and how we responded, is explained in the following statement, released by our PCC on April 6, and printed in the *Daily Worker* on April 7:

To the working class:

The relaunch of the *Daily Worker* on March 25 1992 by the Communist Party of Great Britain was widely welcomed. It was a great step forward for the cause of the working class and communism in Britain.

Of course, we always made clear that the paper would only be published during the course of the general election campaign. Nevertheless it was also stated that the general election *Daily Worker* was a brilliant pointer to the future - to the future communist daily paper that will serve and fully reflect the class struggles and socialist aspirations of workers in Britain.

It was therefore a shock to receive a letter dated March 30 from the solicitors of the Peoples' Press Printing Society, the publishers of the *Morning Star*, demanding that we "desist from using the title *Daily Worker*". Worse, it threatened to seek a court injunction against us, and to claim legal costs, if we did not "halt publication forthwith".

From those who claim to be partisans of the working class, this is a disgusting move. The courts are not neutral arbiters of justice. They are an integral component part of the state - the capitalist state.

After the much publicised court-imposed sufferings of the Birmingham Six, Guildford Four and Tottenham Three, no ordinary person in Britain has any admiration for the courts. After we have seen the NUM, the National Union of Seamen and the print unions legally robbed of their funds and assets, no trade unionist imagines they will find justice from the scarlet robed and bewigged representatives of the boss class.

It is one thing to fight the bosses in the bosses' courts - of course without any illusions or expectations. It is something else entirely for one organisation in the working class movement to drag another through the courts.

The basis for the demands and threats of the *Morning Star*, a non-Party publication, rests exclusively on bourgeois property rights. Our right to use the title rests exclusively on the revolutionary politics of the propertyless.

The *Daily Worker* was first published in 1930, as the paper of the Communist Party of Great Britain. Over the next few years it developed a record of international solidarity, class struggle and militant communism second to none.

There was a price to pay. In 1930 members of the *Daily Worker's* staff were prosecuted by the Labour government's attorney general, William Jowitt, and jailed by a "bewigged puppet" for inciting mutiny. The same happened in 1931 after the Invergordon Mutiny. Later that year, five members of our Party stood for parliament from their prison cells (including Shaikat Usman, who was in prison in India).

As can be seen from our *Daily Worker*, it is that tradition we stand on.

The *Morning Star* stands on a different tradition, the anti-Communist Party tradition of liquidationism. Despite fierce opposition, the revisionists who led our Party closed down the *Daily Worker* in 1966. Their *Morning Star*, which replaced it, claimed to "incorporate" the *Daily Worker*. In fact it was firmly orientated to the right, to reformism and the belief that socialism will come through class collaboration and the existing state.

Not surprisingly then, the *Morning Star* backs and enthused about Gorbachev and Corbachevism. It provided no sort of a militant lead over crucial issues such as Ireland, the EC, the poll tax and the miners' Great Strike. Again not surprisingly, today it tails behind Kinnoch's Labour Party and refuses to support Communist Party parliamentary candidates.

The *Morning Star* is entitled to its opinions and politics. But we too are entitled to fight them. This we will do using the tried and tested methods of the working class - centrally, open ideological struggle.

In that spirit we say it should not be a judge in the bourgeois courts who decides who has the right to the *Daily Worker* title. Let the working class decide. That was the case in Russia back in 1912.

Lenin and the Bolsheviks began publication of *Pravda*, in spite of the fact that Trotsky was already publishing a paper with the very same name. Whatever Trotsky's faults, he had no thought of taking out an injunction.

Tony Chater, Mary Rosser and other *Morning Star* hacks have no intention of relaunching the *Daily Worker*. They want to preserve their property rights. We want to use it for the working class and the struggle for communism.

The People's Press Printing Society might have bourgeois law on its side. But on our side we have militant history and working class morality.

The *Morning Star* anti-Communist Party group can use the courts against us in the spirit of Ian MacGregor and Rupert Murdoch, they can have us fined, imprisoned for contempt. If they do so they will earn the contempt and hatred of all militant workers and socialists.

We propose that the matter of the *Daily Worker* title be settled by a panel of three or five mutually agreed 'judges' from the working class movement. If the *Morning Star* wants to be regarded as still being in the working class movement it must choose: either the 'justice' of the class enemy, or the justice of the working class. We await their reply.

Provisional Central Committee  
Communist Party of Great Britain  
April 4 1992

Now we are not the sort of organisation that rushes off to the bosses' courts to settle political questions. We have more direct and principled ways of working.

So, on Tuesday April 7, directly after a Hands Off Ireland/CPGB picket of the Labour Party press conference, highlighting the election of Bobby Sands to parliament on April 9 1981, our comrades carried out a token, half hour occupation of the *Morning Star* offices.

The *Morning Star* reported this the next day: "Leninists' intimidate *Star* women workers". Its readers were told that this was because of the PPPS's "refusal to concede their group's right to use the name *Daily Worker*".

Neither of these points are true. Firstly, there was only one female member of staff in the building that we saw at the time. She shot straight upstairs to phone the police, then stopped there and was not seen again. It is difficult to 'intimidate' someone you have no contact with.

On the other hand, the female comrade in charge of our occupation was set upon by both CPB national organiser and ex-doorman for the Euros, Nidge Lovey, and CPB executive committee member John Haylett. All the *Star* does is, besides lie, show its own sexist prejudice about 'poor wee defenceless women'.

The *Star* also says it "declined to press charges". Well, let us be honest here: there was no basis at all to press charges, as the police called by the *Star* admitted when we confronted them. But when a key witness missing during the course of the occupation, we were threatened with being charged, carried off to the nearest station and strip searched! When asked if this was with the agreement of the *Star*, the officer in charge replied "yes".

But then, you really should not expect more from the "class" and "workers" hacks at the *Star*. If they are prepared to have us jailed, what is strip searching to them?

The other lie is that regarding the "refusal" of the PPPS. They can "refuse" us what they like, it is no secret of our nose. But threatening us with the courts, with seizure of our organisation's resources and with the arrest of our comrades is something different altogether.

That is what the *Star* threatened us with, and that is what it tries to tell its declining circle of readers. That was the reason for our occupation.

Through years of struggle to reform our CPGB on Leninist principles, we have won the moral and political right to the best traditions of our Party. The Labourite *Morning Star*, and CPB, are the dregs of its worst. They may have the right to it as 'property' in bourgeois law. But, then, the *Daily Worker* at its best delivered effective blows to such 'right'.

And it will again.

Alan Merrick





## OUR HISTORY

# Communist raid on Caerphilly

## The formation of the CPGB and its early years: documents, resolutions and manifestos

The post election Socialist Worker of April 18 makes grim reading. The conclusion is that there needs to be "a fighting socialist alternative to Labour". So what does this entail? Not much, judging from an organisation whose alternative to Labour during the election was ... standing behind John Major's soap box waving "vote Labour" placards. SW even opposes PR because it would rule out a Labour majority - as an alternative to Lenin, who argued that it would increase the chance of getting communist MPs. Now we always thought that alternative meant something different. The SWP's alternative sounds a bit like Henry Ford's colour scheme on the Model T: "You can have any colour you like, just so long as it's black".

The Revolutionary Communist Group's election (not very) special says of revolutionary organisations, including ourselves, who stood candidates in the election: "They are unlikely to get media coverage, unlikely to meet, let alone debate with, other candidates" ... and so it goes on. What we got was a quarter of a million election manifestos and election addresses mailed, plus debates up and down the country with candidates - some on TV, some on radio - numerous features in national and local press... Shall we continue? There are none so blind as those who will not see. But then no one ever accused the RCG of excessive clarity.

Labour's leading 'socialist', Ken Livingstone, is getting some pretty powerful backing: besides the Campaign Group and the odds and sods of the r-r-revolutionary left, your super, soar-away scab Sun, employer of Ken, has also thrown its weight behind him. "Vote for Ken, a real man of the people" it says. You can even get Sun "Livingstone for Labour leader" badges. Now then, Ken, what was that you were saying about MI5 agents? 'People in glass houses', and all that...

Labour loyal Socialist Organiser did not have much to cheer about in the last election - apart from the result from West Belfast. Gerry Adams, president of Sinn Féin, lost to the SDLP's Joe Hendron. "Good news" crowed SO, despite the fact that the UDA has been responsible for Hendron's win by its call for a tactical vote for him to keep Adams out. SO also indicates its support for the imperialist initiative the Anglo Irish Agreement and its preference for the stooge SDLP over SF.

THE CPGB entered its first parliamentary battle in the Caerphilly bye-election of August 1921. The death of Alfred Onions, a right-wing Labour MP and official of the South Wales Miners' Federation led to a three cornered fight between communist, Labour and Coalition (the Tory/Liberal government) candidates.

The campaign was not without incident. The CPGB's agent was refused election documents and a copy of the electoral register by the local council clerk. Bob Stewart, our candidate, was still in prison for his part in a miners demonstration, and was only released part way through the campaign. A welcome boost came when the whole local Labour Party committee in Bedlinog resigned and pledged themselves to work for the CPGB.

The Party's weekly paper carried the following moving account of the battle, penned by TA Jackson.

### Up the reds!

To write the story of the Caerphilly bye-election is not easy. The stage is too crowded, the issues too vast, and the upshot too complex to permit a description in a few cold or flaming words. Those who viewed it from a distance will see in it nothing but an arithmetical proportion of voters, and a majority for the official Labour candidate. Those who were in it and through it will remember it for long as the Red Raid on Caerphilly - the raid which made the valleys of East Glamorgan ring with the shouts of 'Up the rebels!' and which taught the children in the streets to sing at their play 'We'll keep the Red Flag flying here!'

Having no machinery we had to take to the streets. When there was a place to hold a meeting we held one - and when the 'Boys of the Bolshie Breed' hold a meeting in a proletarian quarter the result is a foregone conclusion. Before the election campaign we had some 20 communist voters in the division, at the "show down" - after the Coalition had carted up in their 80 cars every reactionary whom the fear of the red flag had terrified into unwanted exertion and after the Labour Party had bullied, cajoled, whined and wheedled, finishing with the frenzied SOS: "Don't let the Coalition in!" - we had roused and rallied 2,592 votes for communism and the slogan "All Power to the Workers".

With a month to work in and a straight fight against either of them the Communist Party would have swept the deck clean of everything opposed to it.

When I say that we triumphed in the streets I state what is obvious in the result. The Coalition had their press, the Labour Party, the chapels and Co-op halls to make propaganda in. Except for the two Sundays over which the campaign extended - on each of which held indoor meetings - the whole of our work was done in the open. A little canvassing was done - necessarily very little from the size of the area to be

covered and the want of the requisite number of canvassers. Those we had worked like cart-horses with splendid effect; but they were swamped in the flood the Labour crowds were able to mobilise. The Coalition meanwhile conserved their strength in the bourgeois quarters.

So enthusiastic and apparently unanimously were the cheers that greeted our speakers that quite a number of proletarians conceived the notion that Bob Stewart was as good as elected. Their enthusiasm carried into the pit was contagious and our audiences swelled to enormous dimensions. And however big might be the great gun on the Labour platform when our boys had to speak in competition with them it was the rarest of rare things for our audience to be the smaller. As for the Coalition they abandoned the streets altogether so furious was the storm of proletarian contempt roused by their efforts.

While it was wrong to interpret this oratorical success as a portent of electoral triumph it would be absurd to write it off as of no importance. In point of fact it was the outstanding fact of the election. That 'Bolshevik' speakers would venture into the open at all was sensation enough. That they should without waiting to be accused boldly adopt the title as a badge of honour and go on to hold their own with anything and everything in the nature of argument, opposition and interruption was, to many, simply astounding. Crowds came first of all out of sheer curiosity; they remained from interest and returned night after night with intensifying enthusiasm. The official Labour speakers, and in a lesser degree those of the Coalition were well-known by repute. Those of the Communist Party were unknown men - except in a few cases, and those known only to a few of the ILP. Before the election closed the Communist Party speakers had earned on all sides the repute of the finest team of speakers ever sent into an election. And those who knew all of them intimately agreed that each one of them excelled himself - and when a team that includes, to name only a few of the better known, William Paul, William Gallacher, Helen Crawford, Joe Vaughan, Bert Joy, Walter Newbold, Harry Webb, Arthur Macmanus and the candidate Bob Stewart himself - when these and others like them excel themselves only those who know them at their best can imagine the sort of meetings to which Caerphilly was treated.

I record for what it is worth the opinion of a not unfriendly journalist with whom I fraternised during a thirst spell. "Your members are too good; and they are doing their work too well. They are smashing up whatever chance the Coalition crowd had of working the patriotic stunt, and at the same time these are creating a real fear that the Coalition will slip on a split vote. You are frightening the Labour crowd into working as they had never worked before, and at the same time you are making voters whose class consciousness is just far enough roused to make the name (Labour) attractive but not enough to make them whole hog com-

munists". The result certainly lends plausibility to that view.

Ramsey MacDonald in the spleen of his mean soul has asserted that we conspicuously avoided any attack on the Coalition. No lie could be grosser or meaner. Harry Webb challenged a Coalition speaker who interrupted him to debate and a meeting was arranged for Abertrider. The hour arrived but the Coalition speaker was missing. William Paul taunted a Coalition MP on his platform in Caerphilly and played with him before one of the largest crowds I have ever seen in the open. Gallacher's massacre of a group of Coalition speakers headed by Captain Gee VC, was a thing to dream about for a lifetime, and the happiest hour Bob Stewart has spent for a long time was the one during which a Coalition MP who had challenged him had to sit listening to his reply.

It is a lie to say as Macdonald says that we avoided tackling the Coalition; but there is a reason for his utterance. The only Communist speech he listened to was driven into him by Sandy Ritchie, the Lanarkshire miner, whom fate had pitched alongside of him at Taff's Well. That speech was, as it had to be, about the Labour Party in general and Ramsey MacDonald in particular - it will be a long time before Mac forgets it; he will never forgive it.

Apart from open-air meetings and a little canvassing we employed the weapon of literature. First of all was *The Communist* on sale at the regular price. Then two issues of an election supplement to *The Communist*; the first sold at a penny, and the second distributed gratis. For these latter, chief credit is due to the indefatigable AE Cook. Then there was the election address consisting of an abbreviated version of the address to the workers of Caerphilly from *The Communist* of August 13. The great practical problem was the folding addresses and enveloping of this address in time for one to be posted to each elector and this was made possible by a team of as fine a band of real workers as could possibly have been gathered together. There were not many of them but they came from all the surrounding districts - from the Rhondda, from the Western Valley of Monmouthshire, from Cardiff, from Bristol, Sheffield and London and under the command of comrades Brown (of Shipley), Dai Davies (of Bargoed), Hawkins and Shaw they worked wonders. They were of all ages, all proletarians and (if truth must be told) mostly unemployed and therefore broke. They messed together in the committee rooms and a goodly number of them slept at night on the floor. To come home late, weary and hoarse from a round of meetings to find this proletarian bunch getting ready their "shake downs" for the night was like walking into a picture from John Reed's *Ten Days that Shook the World*. They were a great bunch of the real fighting staff. Communism has reason to be proud of its rank and file.

Then there was the difficulty of transportation. To get from village to village in the Caerphilly division means climbing three mountains and crossing two bridges except when you cross

three bridges and climb two mountains. And they are real mountains - not "home made mountains" as Ernie Brown christened the coal-tips! Our speaking campaign would have been physically impossible but for the transport available in the form of two cars, latterly supplemented by a motor cycle and side car. These were put at the disposal of the Party by that most enthusiastic of Bolsheviks, Jim Shand of Salford. At least half of the votes we gained were made possible by Jim Shand. You will perhaps have seen references in the press to "Bolshevik emissaries rushing through the lanes of the Caerphilly division in expensive cars" - and in a way they told the truth. They were perhaps not specially expensive cars to start but by the time they had bumped and thumped over some of the vilest roads ever discovered with eight or ten crowded into what the maker fondly thought was space for six - the whole team keeping themselves cheerful with the 'Red Flag', the 'International' and shouts of "All Power to the Workers" or "Up the Bolshies!" - they will be expensive to mend. The only thing on our side that equalled Bob Stewart on the platform was Jim Shand's driving through the dark back into Caerphilly.

And now that it is all over and the result declared what can we offer as our excuse for raiding in? We lost our deposits, we spent all the money there was, and all we had as individuals on top of it. What did we get in return?

We gained this. We went into an area in which the reaction and despair following upon the failure on the miners' struggle had left the workers hopeless and broken. We found the best men in the district loaded with debts, their jobs refused them, their homes threatened by the landlords greedy for arrears of rent (in the middle of the campaign our sub-agent Dai Davies had a judgment given against him in the county court, so that his work had to be done under the strain of fear of a distraint upon his home!).

Into this psychology of gloom and despair we carried our revolutionary slogans just when the miserable pigeon-livered 'Labour' crew were beginning to chant their chorus of "Leave it to parliament - direct action is never any good". We raided in first we routed the gang of whiners and then we roused the enthusiasm of those who had lost heart and hope.

We put the light back into the eyes of men who were leaden with despair; and a spring into the walk of young men. We brought a resurrection of the fighting spirit. We shamed even the Labour crew into making a show of fighting and we left behind us not only a spirit and a will but the beginnings of an organisation which will make the boss class remember with fury our Red Raid on Caerphilly.

When the poll closed at 8pm we held our meetings in aid of the Russian famine victims. After these had closed we waited in the streets or in the rooms for the figures - passing the time at a sing song presided over by the inimitable Gallacher. And on the morrow we departed in Jim Shand's car to catch the train at Newport.

And as we went through streets and lanes over the hills and down the valleys at every sixth door man, woman, or child or altogether cheered at sight of the red flag flying and answered our slogan with shouts of "Up the Red!" and "Bravo Bob Stewart!"

If we can do what we did in Caerphilly with the odds there were against us the triumph of the rebel workers is in sight

*The Communist* September 3 1921

Labour held the seat with 13,699 votes, the coalition polled 8,958 while the CPGB got off the mark with 2,592. In the general election a year later the Party scored much bigger successes, with the election of two communist MPs taking the class struggle to the heart of the bourgeois parliament.

Compiled by Doug Hulme



## REVIEWS

### Goodbye to the working class

Socialist Review Collective, *Unfinished Business: 20 Years of Socialist Review*, Verso Press, 1991, pp340, no price indicated

THIS ANTHOLOGY of highly academic articles rivals the Yellow Pages in terms of intellectual interest or stimulation. Predictably, it bears about as much relation to Marxism as a copy of *Hansard* (and is a lot less useful for communists).

The absurd hype and trumpet-blowing on the back page gives the game away for anyone not already familiar with *Socialist Review*: "When other left groups and organisations retreated into a depressed sectarianism, *Socialist Review* was elaborating a broad based socialism, intended to intervene within the mainstream of American politics" (my emphasis).

In other words, it made no attempt to link theory to practice and create a revolutionary working class organisation. The authors remained in their comfortable academic communities (all the authors are highly placed university academics) and are more or less content to gaze myopically up the imperialist anus of the ultra-reactionary Democratic Party.

Our beloved 'Marxists' and post-'Marxists' in this book are all out to discredit the Marxism of Karl Marx and replace it with their very own 'Marxism', which is the special preserve of thoroughly petty bourgeois intellectuals, who have absolutely no desire to overthrow the bourgeois state. This 'Marxism' is safe, smug, sanitised and gutted of any working class or revolutionary content.

The intellectual and political development of *Socialist Review* will come as no surprise to anyone familiar with academic 'Marxism', particularly the unlamented *Marxism Today* and its 'leftist' alter ego, the lamentable *Living Marxism*.

*Socialist Review*, which was founded in 1970, started off as *Socialist Revolution*, with a clear commitment to 'democratic socialism'. This clearly gives the game away, as the ideologies of Marxism-Leninism and Maoism were experiencing a mini-renaissance, relatively speaking, among the American left, particularly among the student population, at that time. The writers and editors of *Socialist Review* were not prepared to challenge anti-communism and made preferred the soft option of left social democracy instead.

Even more significant is the name change. It was no accident or whim. The justification for the name change, given in the introduction, starkly illustrates that the editorial team had absolutely no interest in working class politics: "*Socialist Revolution* changed its name to *Socialist Review* in 1978, after long reflection and considerable disagreement within the editorial collective about the evolution of the left and *SR*'s place within it. Part of this reflection involved concern that the use of the word 'revolution' could cut the journal off from part of its potential audience" (p5, Introduction).

Damned by their own words. The "potential audience" talked about here is the 'educated', middle class intelligentsia, who fear working class revolution more than imperialism. This is similar to the debate which surrounded *Marxism Today*, as many argued - quite logically it must be said - that it would increase its circulation if only it ditched the offensive 'M' word. This is the logic of cowards and spineless opportunists. The major difference, of course, being that *Marxism Today* was the theoretical journal of the 'official' CPGB, hence it could not abandon its name so cavalierly. *Socialist Revolution/Review* never had that problem,

since it never had any connection with any working class organisation (as a point of political principle, it must be said).

Unsurprisingly, armed with its new name, *SR* turned towards Europe and Eurocommunism, as it admired the way the Italian, French and Spanish communist parties were "working on innovative theories for transcending capitalism democratically" (*ibid*). *SR*'s politics rapidly mutated from Herbert Marcuse inspired New Leftism to 'Gramscian' inspired Democratic Leftism.

This sterile book is infested with all the 'buzz' words, terms and phrases that bring instant delight to the Nina Temples of this world and induce instant yawning in any communist. Feminism, postfeminism, postindustrialism, post-Fordism, post-Stalinism, post-'Marxism', poststructuralism, sexual politics, discourse, interdiscourse, community, identity, empowerment, hegemony, diversity, economism, transformation, grassroots organisations, autonomous social movements, personal politics - to name just a few old 'favourites' - clutter the text like unexploded land mines.

*SR*'s only 'virtue' is the fact that it is explicit about its anti-communist trajectory - unlike a journal like *Living Marxism* - as it mourns the fact that during the 1980's "Eurocommunist and left social democratic hopes were dashed in one country after another" (p8). Naturally it has shifted further rightwards recently, given the counterrevolutionary collapse of the Soviet Union. It is clear that the "unfinished business" in the title refers to the complete negation of revolutionary Marxism and its transformation into a cravenly reformist, 'radical' liberal-democratic ideology, which is the plaything of fickle, dilettante academics.

Eddie Ford

### Out of context

Nancy Van Norman Baer, *Theatre in Revolution, Russian Avant Garde Stage Design 1913-1935*, Thames and Hudson, 1991, pp207, £14.95

THE BRINGING together of examples from Russian avant garde stage design 1913-1935 for an exhibition in Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco is a self confessed purely academic exercise. This book reflects the practice of putting this period in the history of theatre into the museum to collect dust.

Nancy Van Norman Baer provides us with a collection of writings from various contributors. Each is dense in its description of avant garde stage design of the time and spectacularly supplemented with numerous stunning illustrations. The book's triumph is as a reference to the theatre of the time. What it lacks is any comprehensive analysis of the significance of this.

Each contributor tends to whizz through a number of designers at lightning pace, but due, partly, to the brevity of the articles, leaves little time for analysis. This is a problem in the nature of this style of publication which needs to be bought on the understanding that it is a series of essays rather than a long study. The articles also suffer from repetition, with all the writers looking at a slightly different aspect of the same whole, but offering very little in the way of original insight.

The history of the period, intrinsic to the understanding of the development of art, is given brief mentions throughout, but otherwise remains largely divorced from the study of the development of avant garde stage design and primarily constructivism, which was the dominant force in design during these years. The development of constructivism is looked at in isolation from the development of society, it is isolated from the context within which it emerged, flourished and was eventually banned under

Stalin, though not forgotten and not without leaving its influence on art at home and abroad.

The writers seem to take the view that art develops purely within its own dynamic, or at least this is the defining feature. Clearly the theatre and its design between 1913 and 1935 was defined by, inspired by, reflected and commented on the social and political events within which it existed; art does not exist beyond society, but is a part of it.

Serge Diaghilev's 'World of Art' and particularly the mass presentations such as 'The Storming of the Winter Palace' produced and directed by Evreinov, as the book indicates, attempted to integrate art with everyday life, or more precisely to extend the democratisation of the theatre. However the significance of this is not discussed; to what extent had art not been integral in society previously? How far was a new democratisation achieved, what was the significance of this for the development of theatre, and how was the rapidly changing society related to this movement in theatre?

None of these questions are ventured into to any extent, although they are hinted at. Therefore the essays remain in the past and do not bring us to any understanding of the present or a way forward for the future.

While providing us with a glimpse at the beauty and the powerful innovative break with the old that this theatre made, it fails to give a full understanding of the revolutionary impulse and the continuous drive towards the new that was its essence. It was the revolution that made this theatre possible, made possible the new optimism, opened up a world of possibilities for the future, looked towards a completely new society and at the same time was still filled with the pain of the old.

This was a period of rapid change reflected in the rapid, almost fervid experimentation in the theatre. What does come across in the book is a sense of the desperation to develop the new society and alongside this the new theatre. There were celebrations in the theatre, notably in the numerous 'Blue Blouse' companies. But primarily planning and searching for the new human ideal and the way towards it which was the essence of constructivism.

It was for Meyerhold "the creation of a new human being", but more than that, a new culture, a new society, a new humanity, the race towards liberation seen in the choreography of Duncan dance.

Georgii Kovalenko in the chapter on 'The Constructivist Stage' goes furthest in an understanding of relevance of this theatre; "Revolution had changed everything. Even artistic activity itself was supposed to become completely different. At this time, works of art were discussed in terms usually applied to architecture to the construction of machines, buildings or bridges. Concepts of constructivism such as functionalism, the organization of materials, the economy of means and construction were the badges of the day of artistic identification" (p148). All questions which faced the architects of a new society.

*Theatre in Revolution* provides an encompassing documentation of avant garde theatre design 1913-1935 and as such is a powerful reminder of the achievement of these artists in both the text and the profusion of illustrations which in themselves show the importance of their art. As such it is a fascinating read, but what it lacks is a realization of the significance for all future art and a realization of the triumph and optimism of post revolutionary Russia and how this was reflected in the theatre.

The cutting short of this experimentation under the banning and censorship of Stalin was a tragedy, but this time is not lost or forgotten and should not be relegated to the museum, but analysed and understood for the future of our art and our society. Only then is progress possible.

Linda Addison

## ACTION

### Communist Party

May Day march, 1992: Assemble 12.30pm, Friday May 1-Highbury Fields (nearest tube Highbury and Islington). March to rally in Clissold Park, east London. Special CPGB May Day seminar, Sunday May 3 in central London - phone 081 459 7146 for details.



Again this year, the official leadership of the workers' movement are attempting to downplay the May Day march. In the past, communists have had to defend the very idea of the march from the attempts of the TUC bureaucracy to end it in favour of tacky 'festivals' in plush rabbit warrens like London's Barbican Centre. For communists, May Day is the most important symbolic date in our calendar. It is the concrete manifestation of the indivisible unity of the struggle of our class in every country of the world. This year's march, in the aftermath of the counterrevolution in the world revolutionary centre - the ex USSR - assumes particular importance. The world over, communists will be marching in defiance of this temporary period of reaction. Help the Communist Party build this year's march! Take extra copies of this issue of *The Leninist* to sell to friends and contacts. Join the CPGB contingent on this year's march - marching for proletarian internationalism, for world revolution!

London Seminars: 5pm, central London. Tel: 018 459 7146

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April 26: Quantity and quality. May 3: Special May Day seminar(see above). May 10: Contradiction in nature and society. May 17: Continuity and development.

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# Build the communist alternative

There has been no 'disaster'. Labour's defeat was not a defeat for the working class

**S**URPRISING though it was, there can be no doubt about the extent of Labour's defeat in the April general election. The 21 Tory majority is small compared with last time, that is true. However, it is their fourth consecutive win, and their majority is quite sufficient to last Major a full parliamentary term, ie, four or five years.

Of course, Labour did gain 40 seats. But, as those now vying for its leadership well know, they still have a mountain to climb if Labour is to secure a majority at the next general election. The 1995 boundary commission will see to that (it is expected to 'give' the Tories 12 to 20 extra seats). Moreover, economically and politically, Major found himself boxed into a tight corner, he was forced to fight the election on the worst possible terrain. Britain is in the midst of recession, millions blame the Tories for unemployment, house repossessions, mortgage hikes and industrial decline.

So why did Labour lose?

It had nothing to do with the 'attractive' nature of John Major's personality. His ineffective high tech Val Doonican shows and his silly soapbox exchanges with members of the SWP for the benefit of TV cameras made him look the second rate politician he is. On the other hand, neither did power slip through Labour's hands because of Neil Kinnock's supposed 'triumphalism' at Sheffield. Nor was it, as he claims, the venal influence of the Tory press.

Labour lost because, with the partial exception of Scotland, there is no real movement in society seeking radical change (not that Labour was offering anything of the sort).

Hence, even in the depths of a drawn out recession, the Conservative Party managed to keep intact the 42% of the vote it has enjoyed since 1979: a mass social base which consists not only of the middle classes, who felt threatened by John Smith's tax proposals, but a wide section of the working class, in particular its upper, skilled, stratum, the so-called C2s. They might not have been enthused by the Tories, but they saw no need to defect to Labour. That, and the continued existence of a sizable Liberal Democratic residue from the "mould breaking" Liberal/SDP Alliance means that the ruling class in Britain can continue to rule through its preferred party of government.

Does that mean the 1992 election was without significance? No, in terms of the alignment of the bourgeois parties it was the first 'normal' general election for well over a decade; its most notable feature was the serious challenge represented by the Labour Party.

Labour has made a considerable recovery since the 1983 debacle. Then gripped by a deep internal crisis and haemorrhaging through the SDP breakaway, which at a stroke took away millions from its electoral base, it secured a mere 27.6% of the vote.

There was good reason to believe that the Tories were about to establish themselves as the dominant party in Britain along the lines of the Liberal Democrats in Japan and the Christian Democrats in Italy. For us that never meant the Labour Party was "dead" (as the Revolutionary Communist Party said). It meant the Labour Party had been reduced "from being the alterna-

tive party of government, as it was in the 1950s, 60s and 70s, to being a party of crisis - a role it performed during the 1920s and 30s" (*The Leninist* No52, July 17 1987).

We certainly did not go along with the notion that at the root of Labour's crisis was the decline in the number of manual workers and an interlinked Thatcherite bourgeois cultural revolution.

There never will be, and never was, any direct correlation between the number of manual workers and Labour's vote. Nor was there anything permanent, let alone hegemonic, about Thatcher and Thatcherism.

In spite of this, from Joe Rogaly in the pro-Labour *Financial Times*, to the *New Statesman*, from the Democratic Left's *New Times* to Robin Blackburn in his *New Left Review*, the conclusion is again being drawn that by itself Labour can never win a general election.

If there was ever a case of the old parading itself as the new, here it is. Theirs is not a disinterested assessment. It is the polemical device needed by advocates of Charter 88 type PR and a Lib/Lab coalition to further their petty constitutional projects. Forgetting all their own predictions of a Labour victory, or at least Labour emerging as the biggest party in a hung parliament, these so-called representatives of the 'new' have disintegrated the discredited old "declinist thesis", a version of 1930s Mondism and 1950s embourgeoisified working class, which the pale pink professor Eric Hobsbawm reinvented in the aftermath of Thatcher's election successes in 1979 and 1983.

Well, how do things really stand? In spite of the continued changing composition of the working class - which is inevitable and progressive - Labour is again the alternative party of government. Labour's 271 MPs came as a result of winning 34.2% of the vote. Although Labour is still some way behind the Tories, if anything is in decline it is the Liberal Democrats. The two main parties of the British political system are now again approaching similar social and parliamentary weights.

In terms of politics too there has been a drawing together. Major's post-election ministerial reshuffle marks the end to the Thatcherite crusade and a move in the direction of class consensus. Labour has moved to an even greater degree, not least in its adoption of a whole tranche of Tory policies: anti-trade union laws, privatisation, the criminalisation of squatting, nuclear arms, etc.

So, for all the recent claims to the contrary, there was no fundamental ideological clash between the Tories and Labour in the general election campaign. As Ivo Dawney pointed out in the *Financial Times*, Labour's "manifesto eschews even token gestures to the old Labourism ... Socialism is not even mentioned" (March 19 1992). Thus for many voters the only difference between the two parties was that the Tories were the devil they knew.

Given this, and the likelihood that

under either John Smith or Bryan Gould Labour will be steered even further to the right, it cannot be emphasised too strongly that it was not the working class that suffered defeat on April 9. To state what is ABC for all class conscious workers, elections are not the motor of history. Everything the working class has ever gained is due entirely to its own strength, not because of the colouration of this or that capitalist government. There was no change in the balance of class forces between April 8 and April 10. The organisations of the working class remain as they were.

The Menshevik groupings and press in Britain paint a very different picture. According to Tony Chater's so-called Communist Party of Britain the general election was a "disaster" (*Morning Star* April 14 1992). *Socialist Worker* uses exactly the same word (April 18 1992), and so does the Trotskyite paper *Socialist Outlook* (April 17 1992).

All these, and more, are agreed that Labour would have won if it had not been for the 'new realist' policies of Kinnock, Smith, Gould, Edmonds, Laird *et al*. The CPB's version of John Major again speaks for the lot when he says: "The general election has shown that it is this [watering down of Labour's programme] which makes Labour unelectable" (Tony Chater *Morning Star* April 11 1992).

This is pathetic self delusion. In Britain today bourgeois ideas are the dominant ideas. Labour has made itself electable precisely through Kinnock's policy reviews, purge of Militant, etc. But there is more to it than that. The wailing and weeping over Labour's defeat, the unsolicited advice and tender concern for its fortunes expose the main problem for the left in Britain in all its abject theoretical poverty and philistinism - a deep seated, though completely illusory, faith in the progressive nature and possibilities of Labour in government.

For what remains of 'official communism', Militant and the traditional social democratic left, Labour in government represents the precondition for any advance towards socialism. This is the unmistakable claim of the reformist *British Road to Socialism* programme, a claim to all intents and purposes repeated by Militant, centrally in its semi-programmatic *What we stand for* (see our book *Which Road?*). The Kim Il Sungist New Communist Party is equally besotted with Labourism. It dreams of the day when it can undo the work of the Third International and Lenin, "heal the split between the revolutionary and social democratic wings in the working class movement" and become a federated component of the Labour Party (Charles Fraser, NCP industrial organiser, *The New Worker* April 10 1992).

The Trotskyoid milieu is perhaps less explicit. Nevertheless in essence it peddles the same lie; although Labour might not be set to usher in socialism through its own volition, it is at the very least the lesser of two evils.

The following parliamentary cretinism is typical: "the working class

would benefit greatly and directly from the replacement of the Tories by even the present Labour Party. The working class will be better able to defend itself against a Labour government linked to the trade unions. More than that: the defeat of Major and the Tories will help revive the self-confidence of millions of workers who are now too disheartened to fight directly for their own interests ... If we beat the Tories in the election strikes and industrial militancy will revive. Open class struggle will revive" (*Socialist Organiser* March 26 1992).

With such illusions misleading them, when it came to April 9 the usually bickering Menshevik spectrum was able to unite as one in support of Kinnock: "nothing must be allowed to stand in the way of a Labour victory" said its perfect representative *Morning Star* editor, Tony Chater (*Morning Star* March 12 1992).

Naturally those who like to consider themselves to the left of Chater introduced this or that caveat, but at the end of the day it came to the same thing ... tailing Kinnock - "Vote Labour ... but build a socialist alternative" (*Socialist Worker* March 28 1992). "Vote Labour ... prepare the fight ahead!" (*Workers Press* March 30 1992). "Vote Labour ... and fight for socialist policies!" (*Socialist Outlook* March 21 1992). "Vote Labour ... but reject Kinnock's cowardly policies" (*Workers News* March/April 1992).

Of the bunch, it was the SWP which was perhaps the least sanguine about what a Labour government would bring: "Every socialist should ... vote Labour without the slightest illusion that a Kinnock government would be any better than the Tories ... A Tory victory will increase demoralisation among all those people who long for change. A Labour victory will make change seem just a bit more possible, even though Labour really promises no change at all" (*Socialist Worker* March 14 1992).

Yet judging by Labour's past record there is no reason whatsoever to believe a Kinnock-led government would have benefited the working class. Indeed there is every reason to believe that a government committed to running capitalism - a decaying, rotting system that relies on the ruthless exploitation of the workers - would do everything in its power to weaken and undermine the combativity of the working class.

Showing its own confusion and tendency towards irrationality, the SWP finds itself making this very point while at the same time calling upon people to vote Labour (though adding to the contradiction it refused to canvass or actually work to bring this about).

Surveying the scattering of Labour-type governments that there are in the advanced capitalist world the SWP reckons "Australia is the best example". This would seem to be so. "Labour has presided over the fastest growing gap between rich and poor in Australian history ... Their economic policy was the same free market capitalism championed by

Thatcher ... Workers have been demobilised and Labour has imposed defeats which are the envy of British Tories" (*Socialist Worker* March 28 1992).

Given the fact that Kinnock's Labour Party was not promising anything, definitely not socialism, and would have carried out the same reactionary and demoralising programme as its Australian brother party, it is surely more than naive to "demand Labour acts to protect the rights and living standards of working class people" (*Workers Power* March 1992). Only the working class can fight for and defend the working class.

Quite clearly, except, that is, to the Menshevik left, Labour is part of the problem not the solution. What is needed is not an ill defined, semi-reformist, SWP style "socialist alternative", but a real alternative to the Labour Party. We need a mass revolutionary party firmly based on democratic centralism and Marxism-Leninism that is capable of organising the working class as a class for itself, and leading it to the conquest of state power. In other words what workers in Britain need today is a reformed Communist Party. That is what the Provisional Central Committee of the CPGB and its paper *The Leninist* is committed to build.

We, unlike the opportunist swamp, have no fear of saying that the main enemy of the working class is not the Tories. It is the capitalist system, its state and all its political parties, including the capitalist party of the working class, the Labour Party.

The task of communists in this country was not, and is not, to tail the existing consciousness of the working class, to say "vote Labour" because "millions of workers place their hopes in a Labour government" (*Workers Power* March 1992). Our task is to challenge the Labour Party, to fight for the reformed Communist Party that will replace it as the natural party of the working class.

Part and parcel of this must be fielding as many of our candidates as possible during elections to the bourgeois parliament. Only in special circumstances would we make exceptions. Elections are a chance to argue for revolutionary communist politics - for a different kind of society and a genuine democracy.

Because of this our organisation did not start by looking at what spare resources we had. That is the approach typical of opportunism. We looked at necessity and fielded four candidates on an uncompromising revolutionary manifesto, an integral part of our national campaign to reforge the CPGB (for details see pp4-5).

Our campaign was a great success. Those who mock the communist vote only display their reformism and parliamentarianism. Communists in Britain are weak in terms of popular support. That fact does not mean we should seek out Labour Party short cuts to socialism, this is the road to disaster. We must begin from reality, from where we are, not where we would like to be ... and in terms of impact, propaganda and developing our strength we have made a brilliant beginning.

Jack Conrad